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Dispersal and sociality

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Special Issue
Behaviour

Dispersal and sociality

Guest editors:

Jan Komdeur & Joost Tinbergen

(University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands)

The vast majority of animals live in a social environment: their lives are affected by the presence and activities of other individuals around them. They spend time interacting with members of both their own and other species, they attract mates, care for offspring and group together for hunting or safety and disperse from one site to another. The social environment in which individuals live affects their survival and reproduction, both key parameters in population dynamics and regulation. For example, an increase in population density usually has negative feedback effects on reproduction and survival through conflicts over resources. As density increases, breeding vacancies become rare and individuals may choose to either disperse to suitable breeding sites or remain and delay reproduction or help their relatives to enhance the reproductive output of their kin (social breeding). Hitherto we have paid little attention to the importance of an individual's immediate social environment (interaction with other individuals) on the plasticity and adaptability of an individual's decisions. In this Special Issue of *Behaviour* we aim to highlight the interplay between dispersal and sociality in a spatially structured environment in relation to density-dependent processes and population dynamics. We take a cross-disciplinary approach using original research covering a range of taxonomic groups (insects, fish, birds and mammals). We will focus on how ecological and environmental factors interplay with dispersal and sociality on the one hand and with the genetic structure of the population on the other hand, and on what the short- and long-term consequences for population and species persistence are. It is our hope that the issue will spark increased interest in dispersal and highlights its fundamental role in the evolution of sociality. Interested researchers should contact us by e-mail (j.komdeur@rug.nl or J.M.Tinbergen@rug.nl) before sending in a contribution to this Special Issue.